

The Evolution of the Land Use Planning Process In Alberta, 1945-1984

THE EVOLUTION OF THE LAND USE
PLANNING PROCESS IN ALBERTA
1945-1984

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Research Paper No. 156
(Land Policy Paper No. 5)**

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** a special series on land policies in Canada

Centre for Urban and Community Studies
University of Toronto

April 1985
Reprinted August 1986

ISSN: 0316-0068
ISBN: 0-7727-1321-9

Price: \$4.00

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PREFACE

This is the fifth in a series of papers concerned with Canadian land and planning policies. It continues the work which Professor Hulchanski published in the first of these Land Policy Papers (The Origins of Urban Land Use Planning in Alberta 1900-1945).

Further papers are envisaged on land use planning in other provinces and on specific planning issues.

Funding for the original research was provided by the Social Science Research Council of Canada, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the University of Toronto. This support is gratefully acknowledged. This particular paper was completed with the aid of a grant from the Alberta Department of Municipal Affairs.

The authors would like to thank Brahm Wiesman and Graham Murchie for commenting on a draft of the paper. In addition, the staffs at the Yellowhead Planning Commission, the Metropolitan Edmonton Regional Planning Commission, planning departments for the City of Edmonton and the City of Calgary, the Palliser Regional Planning Commission, the Oldman River Planning Commission, the Mackenzie Regional Planning Commission and the Battle River Planning Commission were generous in granting the authors time and comments in the research for this paper.

I add my appreciation to the many officials who have contributed to this study. Any errors, of course, remain ours.

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March, 1985

INTRODUCTION

It was during the period following the second world war that land use planning was gradually institutionalized as one of the permanent, on-going functions of government. The overall aim of the planning function of provincial and municipal government has been to accommodate growth better, cope with urban change and attempt to reduce the negative impacts resulting from development. Among the negative impacts with which planning has been concerned are the mixture of incompatible land uses, to which zoning has been the chief response; heavy debt burdens on municipalities from the overextension of municipal infrastructure, to which provincial supervision of major capital expenditures as well as mandatory forms of long term planning have been the response; and rapid, often speculative urban fringe development, to which subdivision regulations have been the primary response.

Postwar land use planning has sought to minimize these negative impacts in order to achieve a more efficient accommodation of physical development within a community ensuring that the necessary infrastructure was in place - the roads, utilities, schools, parks and so forth - and that an adequate supply of serviced land designated for residential, commercial and industrial land uses was available. Urban and regional planning has evolved in Alberta, as it has in other provinces, in an incremental fashion, with new regulations and procedures being introduced as problems and needs have been identified.

The evolution of planning in the Province of Alberta offers an interesting case study for several reasons. First, Alberta has been one of the fastest growing regions in Canada. This has created many challenges for provincial and municipal land use and infrastructure planning. Second, its institutional framework of planning instruments and agencies has been in place longer than that of other provinces in Canada. It has, for example, the oldest regional planning commissions in the country. Third, in 1977 the provincial legislature passed a new planning act aimed at providing effective machinery to deal with the development boom taking place at the time. Finally, planning in Alberta has had to cope with very sharp economic boom and bust cycles.

This paper provides an historical overview of the evolution of urban and regional planning in the Province of Alberta since 1945. It continues the research of a previous paper which examines the origins of planning in Alberta up to 1945 (Hulchanski 1981).

The paper is in two sections. The first traces the development of the institutional framework of land use planning since 1945, while the second analyzes more closely the nature and role of land use planning as a government activity in the urban and regional development of Alberta. The appendix provides an outline history of the significant land use planning activities which have occurred in Alberta, its regional districts and major cities, from 1945 to 1984.

I: THE EVOLUTION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Alberta has substantially rewritten its planning act four times, in 1929, 1950, 1963 and 1977, since it was first adopted in 1913. The current land use planning system in the province has its origins in the 1929 town planning act which was, in its day, one of the few planning acts to enable the establishment of a comprehensive system of local, regional and provincial planning instruments and agencies. It provided authority for municipal adoption of master plans and zoning bylaws, the establishment of local planning commissions and, in the case of two or more municipalities, permitted the establishment of district (or regional) planning commissions. Municipalities were also permitted to acquire any land required by a proposed plan. In addition, to administer planning throughout the province, the 1929 act authorized the appointment of a town and rural planning advisory board, a director of town planning and any other provincial planning staff that might be required.

Unfortunately, once the depression of the 1930s set in, implementation of the new planning act was largely forgotten. Municipalities did adopt rudimentary zoning bylaws but little else of substance was ever carried out. Several features distinguish planning under the 1929 act from that under the current legislation. Planning was much more centralized at the provincial level under the 1929 act, little provincial funding was available for planning, and there was little provision for public participation.

The 1929 act was drawn up by one of Canada's most experienced planners, Horace Seymour. Seymour, one of the early advocates of planning in Canada, based many of the provisions of the act on the British model of planning with its emphasis on central government control of local planning and a hierarchy of planning instruments. He also drew upon elements of the American model as represented by the United States Department of Commerce Standard State Zoning Act of 1924 with master plans and zoning bylaws forming the major components of the land use planning system.

Land Use Planning Under the 1929 Planning Act

It was only with the resumption of urban development after world war two, particularly after the Leduc oil strike in 1947, that the provincial government and local municipalities became concerned with land use planning as a function of government. Because of the long depression and the lack of urban construction during the

war, there was a lot of catching up to do. There was a fear that, unless ways were found to stimulate the economy, a return to depressed economic conditions might occur. In addition, the province was faced with the task of managing many bankrupt municipalities, particularly in southeast Alberta, and was also keeping a careful eye on a number of municipalities that were carrying a very heavy debt load. Most of these debts were incurred during the boom periods of the pre-1914 era and the late 1920s when many communities built extensive infrastructure to service urban growth.

The objectives of postwar planning were somewhat different from those of the late 1920s. While the 1929 planning act emerged out of public concerns for conservation and the prevention of nuisances, by the 1940s the needs of municipalities were of prominent concern. However, before municipal planning could be undertaken, municipal finances had to be straightened out by the province, which embarked on a major program of reorganizing, rationalizing and supervising the financial affairs of municipalities. In 1947 a Royal Commission on provincial-municipal relations was established, and by 1951 the city act was adopted by the legislature. This established a uniform municipal code replacing the various city charters (Hanson 1956).

The adoption of urban and rural land use planning measures was a part of this attempt to rationalize local expenditure. Planning, in this context, meant the coordination of municipal physical infrastructure and the regulation of some aspects of private development, mainly in suburban areas, to prevent wasteful development patterns and inefficient use of municipal services.

In this pragmatic and focused approach, land use planning policy was essentially the coordination of public infrastructure i.e. physical services such as arterial roads, water and sewer lines, parks and the separation of land uses with zoning bylaws. The need for this type of land use planning became quite apparent when rapid urban growth was stimulated by the 1947 oil strike at Leduc, just south of Edmonton. Urban development in the Edmonton region needed some coordination at both the municipal and the regional levels. The 1929 act, with its emphasis on conservation and the prevention of nuisances, was simply not adequate. By the late 1940s it became apparent that some major revisions had to be made to the planning legislation.

The 1948 and 1950 Amendments to the Planning Act; the 1953 Planning Act

The first major postwar amendment of the planning act came in 1948 when a new section was added "for the purpose of providing interim development control of development in any proposed subdivision located in an area which is not subject to the provisions of any zoning bylaw". Authority for imposing interim development controls was given to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The 1948 amendment also extended or clarified provisions enabling a municipality to require building permits, to set minimum construction standards, to provide for condemnation and removal of dilapidated buildings and to levy penalties for any infraction of a zoning bylaw.

Municipal planning authority was further expanded by the major revisions of the act adopted in 1950. Changes in the planning legislation found much of their impetus in the Edmonton region. Edmonton city council, faced with the task of coordinating suburban development and a growing problem of scattered urban fringe development and the growth of small dormitory communities on its boundaries, hired two McGill Planning Professors, Harold Spence-Sales and John Bland, to examine the problems and make recommendations to council on a course of action. They recommended that:

- (a) The Minister responsible for the Town Planning Act should be asked to endow the city with immediate power to control interim development.
- (b) The city council should direct and enable its Planning Committee to prepare an outline plan; this should be adopted in some form by council, and the minister's approval of it secured.
- (c) The zoning bylaw should, as an instrument to fulfill the plan, be adopted and submitted for ministerial approval.
- (d) The Edmonton District Planning Board should be created by ministerial authority.

The 1950 amendments to the planning act revised and further updated the institutional framework and instruments for the postwar period. The "official town plan" of the 1929 act became a "general plan" defined as a "plan of plans prepared for the purpose of providing for the development of the territory of a municipality... in an orderly, economic and convenient manner".

The town planning commission of the previous legislation was replaced with a provision allowing municipalities to establish a technical planning board. This board had the power to prepare a general plan or scheme of development a zoning bylaw or any plan or official scheme authorized by the act, "and to advise municipal councils on planning matters, promote public interest in planning and hire professional staff". This was a common change in municipal planning across North America at the time. Planning was increasingly administered directly by elected officials rather than by appointed planning commissioners. Municipal councils also had the option of appointing a planning advisory board "for the purpose of advising council with respect to general planning matters."

The lack of framework of general municipal policy plans and up-to-date zoning bylaws led the government to introduce clearer provisions for interim development control in the 1950 planning act. Interim development control was designed as a somewhat discretionary land use control instrument to regulate development while a general plan and a new zoning bylaw were being prepared. Initiation of interim development control required a resolution from the local council, a minister's "interim development order", and an "interim development bylaw" adopted by the local council. The objective was to suspend the existing zoning bylaw and to authorize the local authority "to exercise control by bylaw over such development as may take place... prior to the coming into effect of the general plan". The use of this sort of administrative mechanism in Canada to temporarily control development was unique to Alberta. It appears to have its origins in the 1932 British planning act which made provisions for "interim development orders" (Toogood 1966).

With respect to broader metropolitan planning, the 1950 amendments provided for the creation of District Planning Commissions to "act in an advisory capacity on any matters pertaining to planning which may be of common concern to any two or more of the represented municipalities" and to "prepare and recommend to each council represented a general plan and a zoning by-law" for the region. The Commissions were initially voluntary and purely advisory: no municipality was required to join, nor did they have to follow any advice the Commission offered.

After three years of experience with the provisions of the 1950 and the 1948 amendments, the whole act was reorganized and rewritten for clarity. Of the few significant changes that were introduced, the most important was the delegation of subdivision approval authority to the Edmonton and Calgary District Planning Commissions (Dant 1963).

The New Provisions in Operation

Most of the new provisions were fairly quickly used by Alberta's larger municipalities. In 1949, Edmonton established a Town Planning Department, hired the city's first professional planner (Noel Dant) and launched a program aimed at adopting an official general plan and a new zoning bylaw. In 1950, an interim development control bylaw was adopted, replacing the 1930s zoning regulations and establishing an interim development appeal board in place of the previous zoning appeal board (Holloway 1982).

In Calgary, similar planning activity occurred. A town planning department was established in 1950. In 1951, the city hired its first professional planner, established a technical planning board and introduced a system of interim development controls replacing the zoning bylaw while a general plan and a new zoning bylaw were being prepared. In 1958, Calgary adopted a new comprehensive zoning bylaw while Edmonton phased in its new zoning regulations between 1961 and 1962. However, general plans took much longer to prepare. Calgary adopted its plan in 1962 while Edmonton did not have a complete general plan until 1971.

The greatest need for regional planning was in the Edmonton and Calgary Regions. In Edmonton, a boom in urban development which was related to the increase in oil industry activity resulted in random development on the fringe of the city and a great deal of land speculation. Meanwhile, Calgary was faced with the task of planning for a large amount of land acquired by the government and the city due to tax delinquencies. Therefore, Edmonton area municipalities joined together to form a district planning commission in 1950, and Calgary area municipalities followed suit in 1951. These commissions were financed by a 50 per cent contribution from the province, 25 per cent from the major city in the region and the remaining 25 per cent from smaller municipalities.

These commissions were never meant to become a third level government. Their purpose, as a voluntary association of municipalities, was to work on resolving inter-municipal problems, advise on annexation and boundary adjustments and coordinate land use planning where more than one municipality was impacted (Burton 1981). Red Deer and the County of Red Deer followed Calgary and Edmonton in 1952 by setting up the Red Deer District Planning Commission to deal with similar problems.

District planning commissions were fairly quickly established in many parts of the province; between 1950 and 1960 eight were established (see Table 1). Most commissions were viewed by municipalities as a supplement to municipal planning, and much of the time of the commission staff was directed to the preparation of local plans

TABLE 1

Establishment of Regional Planning Commissions in Alberta

1950	Edmonton Regional Planning Commission
1951	Calgary Regional Planning Commission
1952	Red Deer Regional Planning Commission
1954	Medicine Hat Regional Planning Commission
1955	Oldman River Regional Planning Commission
1958	Peace River Regional Planning Commission
1960	Battle River Regional Planning Commission
1978	Palliser Regional Planning Commission
1982	Yellowhead Regional Planning Commission
1983	Peace River Regional Planning Commission is split into two regions: South Peace Regional Planning Commission Mackenzie Regional Planning Commission

and bylaws. Many of the commissions were established to provide planning services locally that previously had only been available from planning staff based in Edmonton. Except for the two largest cities, few of the commissions had to deal with the urban fringe problems of the larger municipalities. As a result, only Edmonton and Calgary moved ahead on the adoption of general plans.

In 1951, the Edmonton District Regional Planning Commission adopted an outline plan for the Metropolitan Area which was followed by a preliminary regional plan adopted in 1959. A preliminary regional plan was also adopted by the Calgary District Planning Commission in 1962. These plans were essentially land use control documents rather than policy documents, and were aimed at regulating and coordinating urban fringe growth and rural development. Each consisted of a map divided into land use districts, and accompanying regulations.

It was not until the late 1960s and the 1970s that the district (regional) planning commissions outside of Calgary and Edmonton, would pursue, prepare and adopt regional plans. The pace of land use change and development in the smaller centres and rural areas did not warrant these land use planning measures. In addition, until the establishment of the Alberta Planning Fund, limited funds were available for regional planning.

The fact that very few municipal and regional plans were adopted prior to the 1970s, whereas zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations were in place much earlier, clearly indicates the major focus of the planning process. Zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations addressed themselves to very real and immediate problems in the land market. Zoning helped protect property values in better residential and commercial districts by preventing potential non-conforming uses. It also assisted in the rationalization of public investment in municipal infrastructure by concentrating those land uses in areas appropriately serviced. Zoning discouraged random urban fringe growth and identified areas for higher density development where municipal services such as public transit and other infrastructure were available. Finally, land use controls were also helpful in assuring the availability of land for industrial development in areas serviced with rail and other necessary facilities.

In a physical sense, land use planning's greatest impact on the physical layout of the city came not through policy plans such as general municipal plans but through powers to undertake replottings of undeveloped subdivisions laid out on grid basis. The City of Edmonton coordinated the redesign of these

neighbourhoods with curvilinear streets and central neighbourhood parks akin to the "neighbourhood unit" concept were implemented (Perry 1939).

General municipal and regional plans, on the other hand, attempted to direct growth over the long term and, as a result, generally dealt with longer term problems. The availability of municipal funds and trained professional planners was limited. Most of the local government's limited planning resources were directed to more immediate concerns such as subdivision control. The replotting of tracts of land designed on a "grid and block layout" and the administering of land use controls took up the major proportion of the municipalities' time. The pressure to design and develop improved residential neighbourhoods was particularly great in such cities as Edmonton and Calgary (Bettison et al. 1975).

In addition to this pragmatic focus, the political climate was not conducive during the 1950s and early 1960s for a major intervention by local government into the land development marketplace. Too much restriction of private property rights was not acceptable during this period and, in addition, there was no great pressure on the government to impose restrictions. The central concern to municipalities remained the administration of land use controls and the development of municipal infrastructure to accommodate private land development.

The 1963 Planning Act and Later Amendments

Experience with the legislation led, by the beginning of the sixties, to pressure for some changes. Particularly significant was the emphasis on transferring decision powers from officials to elected representatives (a reaction to the misuse of powers highlighted in a 1959 judicial inquiry into planning in Edmonton by Justice M.M. Porter).

The change was incorporated in the 1963 act. Most of the provisions of this act, however, were aimed at clarifying and simplifying the system.

Many of the changes were simply housekeeping measures such as changing the name of district planning commissions to regional planning commissions, the replacement of technical planning boards by municipal planning commissions (with essentially the same membership) and the elimination of planning advisory commissions (usually made up of local unelected citizens). A more significant change was the requirement that regional planning commissions prepare regional

plans and preliminary regional plans as development control devices.

The 1963 planning act remained in force until 1977, but during this period several important amendments and administrative changes were made that had a significant impact on land use planning in Alberta.

In 1968, the province delegated subdivision approval authority to regional planning commissions for all the municipalities in their regions. Prior to 1968 regional planning commissions only had subdivision approval responsibilities over some of their member municipalities. This delegation of authority to regional planning commissions was a step in decentralizing this one element of planning activity. In 1968, the province also required all regional planning commissions to prepare and complete preliminary regional plans by 1972. However, this work proved to be beyond the budgetary capacity of the regional planning commissions. The commissions had to rely on member municipalities to advance funds for their operation. This proved to be an inadequate source of funding. Therefore, in 1970 the Alberta Planning Fund was established which was to be funded by provincial contributions and compulsory municipal contributions. The province provided as much as 70 per cent of its financing. This was a significant administrative change because it indicated an increased provincial commitment to the regional process and allowed the development of a broad framework of local plans and bylaws by allocating increased resources for the commissions to work with local municipalities in the preparation of land use bylaws and general plans. The institutional framework was significantly strengthened and developed during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The 1977 Planning Act

The most recent rewriting of the planning act, completed in 1977, did not alter the basic approach to planning. The 1977 act is very much in the same tradition as previous legislation. As one provincial publication noted, it does "not represent radical, new elements by which planning will be conducted..." but rather "is an evolutionary progression in a sixty-five year tradition of planning, representing a modification of the process to meet the demands of this period in Alberta history" (Murchie et al. 1980).

The 1977 planning act was the result of a lengthy process of consultation between provincial, municipal officials and the public. It began in 1972 when

the Minister of Municipal Affairs announced that work would begin on drafting a new act. Towards a New Planning Act was published by the province in 1974 as a basis for discussion with the public and with the professional and business communities on the content of the new legislation.

Russell, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, noted in the letter of transmittal that the provincial government wanted the new act to provide:

- flexible planning and zoning techniques;
- stronger direction for overall planning by the province;
- provide for the special problems of the two metropolitan areas;
- consider environmental concerns.

Futhermore, the report indicated that the new act would, as with previous legislation, attempt "a reconciliation of the often conflicting interests of an owner of land and the interest of the public". It was suggested that more avenues of public participation and appeals would be in order "since more emphasis is being placed on the public aspects of private property rights".

Meanwhile the legislature had established a second review of land use planning in the province, the Land Use Forum. Its mandate was to study various land use issues and problems in the province focusing on the increasing urban use of agricultural land. The Land Use Forum issued its final Report and Recommendations in January 1976, reporting on issues relating to the family farm, recreational use of agricultural land, land use in and adjacent to urban areas as it affects the cost of housing, corporate farms and foreign ownership, and the influence of land use on population distribution in the province. In its final report, several general criticisms were made of land use planning in the province. It noted that there was :

- (1) a degree of confusion as to who was responsible for what, between municipal and provincial jurisdictions;
- (2) some lack of coordination within the departments of the provincial government;
- (3) a slowing down of decision-making.

Finally, in March 1977, after a five year drafting and public participation process, the draft planning bill was introduced in the legislature. About ten months and

some 100 amendments later, the new planning act was adopted.

The legal, technical and administrative aspects of the new planning act have been quite thoroughly analysed elsewhere (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 1980; Elder 1979; Smith 1980). It attempted to clarify the roles of provincial, regional and local authorities, streamline development approval procedures, and increase public participation in land use planning. The planning act embraced a clear hierarchy of planning instruments and authorities. Some increase in autonomy was granted to municipalities, but the provincial government maintained authority for approving regional plans.

In addition to strengthening public participation requirements, the new act aimed further to decentralize planning. Because the provincial government required that all regional planning commissions adopt a regional plan by the end of 1982, provincial officials felt they could allow greater autonomy since local decisions would have to conform to the regional plan. Alberta's new planning act went much further than most other provinces in increasing local autonomy. For example, some of the powers given to municipal councils by the 1977 planning act were:

- to determine the content of a general municipal plan,
- to pass land use bylaws assigning permitted uses of land within defined sectors of a municipality,
- to establish procedures for issuing development permits,
- to establish direct control districts within which local councils can exercise considerable flexibility in determining land uses,
- to impose off-site levies or redevelopment levies to offset the cost of improved municipal services,
- to establish a local development appeal board and the position of development officer, and
- to delegate some of the local council's planning responsibilities to the municipal planning commission.

This partial decentralization of planning jurisdiction follows the gradual process, begun in 1929 but accelerated after the 1940s, whereby more and more of planning was being decentralized. A major factor in this was the increasing ability of municipalities to undertake greater responsibility. But there were

three other factors. First, the regional planning commissions had begun to fulfill their mandate of preparing general municipal plans and better land use bylaws for small municipalities. Second, the establishment of the Alberta Planning Fund in 1970 further bolstered resources for regional and municipal planning. Third, the province required all municipalities to complete a general municipal plan by March 1980.

The province also attempted to streamline development control by replacing the zoning and development control bylaws with a more comprehensive "land use bylaw". Prior to 1978, municipalities administered land-use control in certain areas such as the downtown through development control instruments (Edmonton's land-use classification guide is one example). Other areas of the city were administered under different procedures through zoning district regulations. The City of Calgary almost exclusively used development control until 1978 except in low density single family and duplex neighbourhoods (Elder 1980). The new provisions for landuse bylaws attempted to clarify the numerous legal and administrative problems between zoning bylaw and development control bylaws by laying out land use districts and new "direct control districts". The direct control districts were designated in special areas of the city such as the downtown and historic districts where municipalities desired more discretion and flexibility in making land use control decisions.

Land Use Planning in Alberta Since 1977

Since 1977, land use planning in Alberta has had to operate in two very distinct contexts. First, from 1977 to 1981 the province's economy grew at a faster pace than any other province in Canada. This resulted in a rapid rate of urban growth, major land use changes and very large demands on municipal infrastructure. There was also a great deal of plan preparation due to requirements for general municipal plans. In addition, regional planning commissions were engaged on the preparation of regional plans. However, by 1982, a fall in oil prices and a shift in exploration activity to frontier regions resulted in a dramatic drop in growth for the province.

Since 1982, land use planning in Alberta has been marked by the reduction in planning staff in municipal, regional and provincial planning offices due to reduced municipal budgets, the completion of plans and bylaws, and a much reduced rate of urbanization.

Land Use Planning in Alberta 1977-1981

During the 1977-1981 period of rapid growth, the pace of planning activity increased substantially. Regional planning commissions and municipal planning offices were kept busy preparing the land use bylaws, regional plans, and general municipal plans that had been required by the 1977 act. Among the more significant studies of the period was the Regional Planning System Study undertaken by the Inter-agency Planning Branch of the Department of Municipal Affairs. The study found that regional planning had made a contribution in the transformation of the province from a predominantly rural agricultural community to a province where the large majority of the population lived in urban areas. Furthermore, it noted that:

- (1) the regional planning commissions had provided a readily available source of advice and expertise on planning and governmental matters at the municipal level,
- (2) the regional planning commissions were one of the major watchdogs of the broad "public interest",
- (3) the commissions were responsible for developing a sound approach to the planning and development of both public and private lands.

Finally, the report made the following recommendations regarding the future operation of the regional planning system:

- (1) regional plans should be broad policy documents, rather than detailed control documents;
- (2) municipal planning capabilities should be strengthened;
- (3) it should be ensured that municipal plans conform to the regional plan.

During the study, the Alberta Planning Board released A Guide for the Preparation, Review and Approval of Regional Plans, which was the first in a series of "decision reports" advising the regional planning commissions of the required format of regional plans. This guide gave regional planning commissions flexibility in the scope and content of the plans. It notes that "each region would interpret content differently". Furthermore, the report emphasized that "it is not the function of the regional plan to specify the details of implementation. This should be left to other statutory instruments."

Due to the 1982 deadline for the preparation of regional plans, the Alberta Planning Board had a large number of plans to review and approve in the early 1980s. The Board, however, was dissatisfied with the content of many of the plans and, in 1982, released revised guidelines for the preparation of regional plans. This resulted in a delay in the adoption of many of the plans. By 1982, no regional plans had been approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

During this period, a number of smaller and medium sized municipalities gained subdivision approval powers similar to those held by Calgary and Edmonton (Lethbridge, St. Albert, and the County of Parkland). This shift in approval authority further localized land use planning and somewhat reduced the authority of the regional planning commissions.

Finally, the rapid growth in the province was resulting in another problem: the proliferation of industrial development in rural agricultural areas. This problem was particularly prevalent in the Calgary and Edmonton regions where the cost of industrial land had risen particularly high. Rural municipalities were anxious to increase the size of their assessment and welcomed such development. The issue became particularly contentious in the Calgary region and resulted in several years delay in the completion of a regional plan that was satisfactory to the rural municipalities in the provision for such development. In an attempt to clarify provincial policy in this area, the Alberta Planning Board released a document, A Framework for Application of Regional Plan Guidelines and Rural Industrial Land Use - Some Policy Guidelines for the 1980s (1981). The report noted that a "regional plan shall provide for the conservation of better agricultural land by defining in the plan (for the guidance of municipalities) the criteria for the identification of these lands".

Land use planning in Alberta 1982-1984

The more recent period has been marked by slow economic growth and, in some cases, population decline. This has caused some questioning of the need for an extensive land use planning system in the province. As municipal budgets tighten and as funding from the Alberta Planning Fund is reduced, planning staffs have been cut. Although the decline in growth has not been as dramatic as occurred during the 1930s, it is the first time since the second world war that the land use planning system established for the purpose of coping with rapid growth and urbanization, has operated in an environment of slow growth. This new context has brought new problems that are reminiscent of the post-world war one era and the depression decade, when many municipalities had to operate with heavy debts incurred during boom periods because of the extensive construction of municipal infrastructure. The land use planning system was established to help avoid such problems, though, of course, such a rapid fall in the rate of growth was not anticipated.

This period has also been marked by increased pressure from the Alberta Planning Board on regional planning commissions to alter the content of their regional plans and downsize their operations. In 1982, the Alberta Planning Board released two "decision reports" directed to regional planning commissions. The first directive, A Decision Report: Revised Guidelines for Regional Plan Preparation and Review, was released in early March 1982 (updating the 1980 report A Guide for the Preparation, Review and Approval of Regional Plans).

There were four significant policy changes in the 1982 report. First, the 1980 guidelines had given the regional planning commissions much more scope in policy areas. The commissions were allowed to venture into such areas as social or economic concerns. The 1982 guidelines limited the commissions to physical land use planning. Second, many of the regional plans had been development control documents and also contained many detailed policies to which municipalities were bound. For example, the Edmonton and Calgary Preliminary Regional Plans were, in many respects, land use control bylaws that controlled the development of land. These plans often had to be amended to allow the subdivision of land in member municipalities. The board was now indicating that municipal plans and bylaws would fulfill this function. Third, under the revised

guidelines, regional planning commissions had to adhere to a much stricter format in the content of their plans and to a more limited scope of policies. Fourth, the Alberta Planning Board took more of an active role in the determination of land use policy. During the early 1980s they released two reports outlining provincial land use policy - Rural Industrial Land Use - Some Policy Guidelines for the 1980s (1981) and Agricultural Land: The Role of the Alberta Planning Board (1983).

In late April 1983, the Alberta Planning Board released A Decision Report: Framework for Application of Regional Plan Guidelines "to serve as an outline specification illustrating the application of the guidelines in the preparation of regional plans". This decision report outlined how various topics in the regional plan were to be treated. Special attention was given to the development of agricultural land as the minister sought to reinforce the province's commitment to the preservation of agricultural land and the family farm through subdivision and land use regulations. The report also emphasized that the plans were to be a guide for the "physical development" of the region and that concern for such "soft" services as social services and community facilities was not to be addressed in the plans. These two decision reports illustrate the more positive role being taken by the Alberta Planning Board.

In this most recent period planning in Alberta could be characterized as uncertain and turbulent. The utility of the existing framework of plans, instruments, authorities, policies and regulations was now in question. The reduction in provincial funds for regional planning commissions and the proposal that planners should act as "catalysts" rather than as regulators are indicative of the new environment (Alberta Municipal Affairs 1984).

Conclusion

By 1984 land use planning had emerged as an important function of provincial and local governments. Since 1945 the institutional framework had been developed into a complex system of planning instruments, regulations and planning authorities. The characteristics of this framework emerged from a series of new planning acts and almost yearly incremental changes to the legislation.

There have been five significant changes in the institutional framework of land use planning since 1945. First, land use planning has become a statutory requirement for most municipalities. The majority of municipalities are now required to have development appeal boards, land use bylaws and general municipal plans. All regional planning commissions are now required to adopt regional plans. These provincial legislative requirements have ensured that municipalities and regional commissions prepared land use control decisions within a prescribed regulatory framework.

Second, the regional planning commissions have greatly contributed to putting in place a framework of municipal land use policies and regulations. This has set the stage for the devolution of planning authority from the province and the regional planning commissions to municipal governments. In addition, the province has supported this shift by granting a number of municipalities subdivision approval authority and eliminating any requirement for ministerial approval of general municipal plans.

Third, the prominent role that regional planning commissions have played in land use has been reduced somewhat with municipalities gaining increased responsibility. Although during the 1970s funding for the commissions was substantially increased with the establishment of the Alberta Planning Fund, this fund is now being cut.

Fourth, the Alberta Planning Board has emerged as a more prominent actor in the land use planning system. Its operation as an appeal board has expanded substantially during the 1970s and 1980s to other areas. The board is now taking a much more active role in the determination of regional plan policies and of the content and format of general and regional plans. This is also indicative of an increased determination of the provincial government to develop broader land use policies based upon provincial concerns.

Fifth, since 1845 the character of land use planning has been altered with the introduction of interim development control in 1948 and with direct control districts in 1977. The addition of these powers has increased the discretionary power of municipalities in the regulation of land uses. As a result, land use planning in Alberta draws from both the British and American traditions of planning.

The next chapter further explores the nature and role of land use planning in Alberta based on observations of the system by various governments, private consultants, academics and planning authorities.

II: THE NATURE AND ROLE OF LAND USE PLANNING IN ALBERTA

Land use planning has emerged in Alberta as a prominent function of municipal and provincial government. In response to the need to construct municipal infrastructure to accommodate land development and to the spread of urban uses into rural areas, the provincial government developed an increasingly complex, technocratic system of land use planning. By 1984 most municipalities had general plans and land use bylaws, almost half of the regional planning commissions had passed regional plans and the provincial government through the Alberta Planning Board was playing a major role in the development of municipal and regional land use policy. This chapter examines the nature and role of land use planning in Alberta from 1945 to 1984 by reviewing land use planning as a government function and the relationship it has with the private sector. The broader context is first explored by reviewing: the role and objectives of land use planning; land use planning as a provincial function; and the impacts on it of economic and social changes. Following this, the land use planning system is examined by reviewing: the role of general municipal and regional plans and the technocratic nature of the system.

This section's discussion is based on a number of sources: interviews with planning staff across the province at the regional, municipal and provincial levels; the response of each of the regional planning commissions to questions in a letter sent in June 1984; and regional and municipal plans, newspapers and secondary sources such as articles and reports.

Three themes are of most importance in the following discussion. First, land use planning has played a central role in enabling private land development through the orderly expansion of urban areas and the municipal provision of infrastructure. The provincial government has been careful to limit the restrictions placed on the private sector to a few areas of concern, such as the protection of agricultural lands. Second, land use planning has nevertheless become a complex technocratic system involving many departments, organizations and agencies. In some respects, this process has served to needlessly hold up land development and thereby place unnecessary restrictions on the private sector. Third, the effectiveness and prominence of regional planning commissions have been reduced while the provincial government and municipalities have expanded their roles.

The Roles and Objectives of Land Use Planning

The philosophic origins of the legislation governing land use planning in 1945 can be found in such concerns as the prevention of nuisances, the preservation of natural beauty and the protection of property values through zoning bylaws. Since that time these concerns have given way in new planning acts to the present approach aimed at making efficient use of provincial and municipal investment in infrastructure, coping with undesirable outcomes of the land development process and the overall goal of ensuring that there is an adequate supply of serviced land for the accommodation of growth. Land use planning plays a central role in the land market due to the ability of land use regulations, approval processes, plans and policies to have an impact on the supply and price of land.

Although Alberta has had a planning act since 1913, there have been few explicit statements of what the objectives of planning legislation are. Not until 1959 was a statement of objectives added to the act. However, the definition was very broad and general:

The purpose of this act is to provide means whereby municipalities, either singly or jointly, may plan for orderly and economical development without infringing on the rights of land owners except to the extent that is necessary, for the greater public interest, to obtain orderly development and use of land in the province.

As in most provinces, the Alberta planning legislation places emphasis solely on physical planning to accommodate growth, while such concerns as social planning, social development and other typically "non-physical" concerns are excluded.

In the late 1950s the proviso that planning could be carried out "without infringing on the rights of individuals except to the extent necessary for the greater public interest" was added to the planning act. Until that time, planning regulations were not very extensive nor were they being implemented to any great extent. Some fairly rudimentary zoning bylaws and subdivision controls were in place, but these could be amended quite easily and did not significantly impinge on property rights. With the rapid pace of postwar urban development, the need for planning became increasingly obvious and the planning act was continually

amended. These amendments all had the effect of making public land use regulations much more extensive, affecting more aspects of urban development. The new legislation and regulations also made planning more enforceable. Under these conditions the political question of the extent to which the public had the right to intervene in the rights of private property became an increasingly important issue.

When the Alberta legislature debated the 1977 planning act the statement of purpose in the act came under some discussion as MLAs attempted to determine what the government considered "the greater public interest". In the absence of any more definitive statement of provincial land use policy, some concern was expressed by members of the legislature about the growing public role in land use decisions, especially in view of the slightly increased autonomy municipalities were being given by the new act.

The balancing of the interests of land owners and the public interest forms a cornerstone of the philosophy inherent in land use planning. On the one hand, the plan operates as a constraint on the private market. On the other hand, land use planning also plays a role in the rationalizing the land market and reducing uncertainty.

McFadyen and Johnson (1981) in their study of land use regulation in Edmonton found that land use regulations had not "resulted in direct costs to developers [and that] they had financially benefited from approval delays on land projects in the sense of capturing increments in land costs greater than the additional holding cost incurred."

The objectives of land use planning in Alberta can best be described as the rationalization of land market forces to accommodate growth. Land use planning is primarily undertaken by local and regional authorities to supervise land development and the conversion of non-urban land to urban uses at a pace that can be serviced by municipal infrastructure and that can keep up the pace of on-going and expected growth. A second objective relates to the already developed portions of the city where land use changes are regulated to protect property values. A third objective, which has grown in importance during the 1970s (and was initially a concern that give rise to the 1929 planning act) is the protection and conservation of natural resources. Finally, the pursuit of these objectives by local and regional authorities is constrained by the efforts of policy-makers to balance the public interest as defined by local and regional planning policies with the rights of individual property owners.

Land Use Planning as a Provincial Government Function

Land use planning within the Alberta government operates in a much broader context than that set by the 1977 planning act. The period since the second world war has been distinguished by a great growth in government as illustrated by the increase in public agencies involved in policy-making and the provision of services. In some respects, this increase in the size and complexity of the provincial government has served to give land use planning a narrower role. In many cases provincial government departments, such as Transportation and Environment, have statutory duties to over-ride plans and planning authorities.

The Department of Environment has gained a particularly prominent role in land use planning. Formed in 1970, it influences land use planning through its role in water resource management, its responsibility for environmental impact studies, and its jurisdiction over Restricted Development Areas (RDAs). The department attempts to reconcile conflicts in the use and control of water and provides advice to regional planning commissions on water resource matters; it has a broad role in resource management and natural resource development through its environmental assessment division; the minister has complete authority over land use planning and development in all of the province's RDAs (thirteen were set up by cabinet order to prevent the environmental deterioration of special areas and to ensure the existence of utility corridors for pipelines and highways around the province's two major cities. For example, much of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and adjacent ravines have been designated as RDA. There are also RDA "corridors" encircling both Calgary and Edmonton). The Department of Environment is also involved in water and sewer planning for various regional utilities which often dictate the amount of future population growth and economic development.

Another government department playing an important role in land use planning is the Department of Housing and Public Works. Until the postwar period, the Department of Public Works was responsible for the administration of the planning act. Since 1945, apart from its role in the supervision of the construction of all provincial buildings, the department actively influences land development through the Alberta Housing Corporation and the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation. AHC is responsible for the provision of social housing and also acts as a developer in many communities under the Land Assembly and Development Programme and the Industrial Land Assistance Programme. Most recently, it played an important role in planning and developing residential subdivisions in Canmore and Fort McMurray.

The Department of Recreation and Parks is responsible for the location and planning of the provincial park system. Alberta undertook an ambitious programme of park expansion and development during the 1970s (Environment Canada 1974).

Playing a high profile role in land use planning in the province is the Department of Transportation, which is responsible for the planning and development of the province's highway system. It is authorized to control development on either side of provincial highways up to 1,000 feet from the centre line. Fortunately, there have been good relationships between the department and the regional planning commissions on land use planning and policy matters.

The Department of Energy and Natural Resources is responsible for developing policies and programmes for the development of Crown lands. It has prepared "integrated resource management plans" to guide the development of natural resources in the province. Because resource development is often a major concern to regional planning commissions, it is understandable that the plans which this department prepares and implements are of great interest to regional and local planning authorities. However, there is still no satisfactory means of consultation between regional authorities and the department. (Until the 1977 planning act, many of these departments had representatives on the regional planning commissions, but this act stipulated that only elected officials could sit on planning commissions.)

Provincial land use planning is formulated and implemented by an increasing number of departments and authorities which often act independently of one another with no reference to a comprehensive provincial land use policy. Alberta, like all but one of the other provinces, has never outlined a comprehensive provincial land use policy. The exception is Manitoba which, in 1978, issued a 27-page document Manitoba Provincial Land Use Planning Policies. (This lays out, in some detail, provincial policies with respect to all categories of land use: agriculture, rural residential, urban, recreation, shorelands, resources areas, hazard lands and highways.)

The Alberta government has also begun to define provincial land use policy in certain selected areas as exemplified by the release of policy statements on rural industrial development (1981) and the development of agricultural land (1983).

Some provincial planners have argued that regional planning commissions and their regional plans make up a provincial land use plan for most of the province. However, while the commissions have been strengthened and supported by increased provincial grants and the new planning legislation, their leading role in land use

planning at the regional level is seriously undermined by three developments. First, the growth of active policy and service agencies such as Alberta Housing and Public Works have substantial resources for undertaking plans and development according to their own policies. Second, Alberta Environment has gained a high profile role and absolute authority over such areas as RDA lands and impact assessment. Third, many other departments have formed their own policy independent of local and regional planning agencies.

The growth of strong active provincial departments with few ties to regional planning commissions is indicative of the provincial government's limited commitment to the decentralization of land use planning.

The Impact of Economic and Social Changes on Land Use Planning in Alberta

Land use planning in Alberta has attempted to respond to the economic growth and urbanization of the province since the second world war. This period has been marked by a number of social and economic changes in the province: heavy urbanization with most of the population living in urban areas; the two metropolitan areas, Calgary and Edmonton, have become even more pre-eminent and contain more than half of the province's population; the per capita income of households and persons in the province has grown to the point where it is one of the highest in the country. Many of these changes have resulted in conditions such as increased development pressures, population dispersal and scattered development, demands for increased services, and the expansion of metropolitan areas.

The provincial government responded to these developments with a number of studies, commissions, and amendments to the planning legislation. Groups studying the problems included the McNally Royal Commission on the Metropolitan Development of Calgary and Edmonton (1956) and the Task Force on Urbanization and the Future (1971).

The period following the second world war marked the beginning of the boom which continued with little interruption until 1981. Edmonton, due to its position as the provincial capital and its proximity to the Leduc strike, felt the growth pressures most intensively. Based on the recommendations of the study by Bland and Spence-Sales, the provincial government clarified and refined the interim development control powers of municipalities to cope with the urban growth of the period. The suspension of out-dated zoning bylaws and the imposition of development

control appeared to be the only option for the control of urban growth in the absence of up-to-date land use regulations and policies. District planning commissions were also introduced in the 1950s to promote intermunicipal cooperation in the control of growth of the urban fringe of municipalities.

In this respect, the boom in metropolitan growth during this period resulted in important changes in the nature of land use planning in Alberta. In particular, the foundation of regional planning was laid in response to the problems related to development on the urban fringes of Calgary and Edmonton.

The 1977 planning act made no significant changes to the basic nature of statutory planning. The important achievement of this legislation was to further clarify the role and nature of statutory planning instruments and authorities through the hierarchy of plans. Planning was also made mandatory for larger municipalities in the province.

Now, however, the province is undergoing a period of slow growth, with a land use planning institutional framework which was designed for conditions of rapid growth. Even Calgary is now declining in population. A number of municipalities, as of 1984, were on the brink of bankruptcy. Many of these communities are located in areas where exploration for natural gas and oil was underway, or in areas slated for megaprojects such as the Cold Lake Heavy Oil project and the tar sand projects proposed for the northeastern portion of the province. In the Cold Lake region, for example, the town of Grand Centre (190 miles northwest of Edmonton) found its bank accounts garnished by a landowner from whom it had purchased land for a sewage lagoon. The town was unable to pay the \$3.56 million for the land unless it imposed a property tax hike. Due to the general economic decline, the new sewage lagoon is no longer needed. Stony Plain, just west of Edmonton, is now paying \$550,000 annually on a \$4 million debenture for 290 acres of land, and taxes had to be increased 44.7 per cent due to the lack of expected increase in the town's assessment. In Plamondon, 100 miles north of Edmonton, the entire council quit rather than impose a massive tax hike to pay for sewer and water facilities for a subdivision that was not built due to lack of demand. The village is now being administered by the Department of Municipal Affairs. Elsewhere in Alberta at least a dozen towns are facing huge debts undertaken in anticipation of residential or industrial growth that has never materialized.

Several observations can be made on Alberta's present situation and the impact it will have on the planning process. Although it is unlikely that planning will come to an almost complete halt, as it did during the depression years, some retrenchment can be expected. Staffs in municipal, provincial and regional offices will be cut, a situation which is already occurring, especially since the reduction of the Alberta Planning Fund and lower property tax revenues. Much of the impetus for land use planning has been to manage and coordinate municipal infrastructure improvements. The province is currently overprovided with infrastructure; little construction of such facilities can be expected in the near future. Therefore, there will be less need for planners, land use planning and the coordination of development. Municipal development control activities have been much reduced, and a new role for the planner as a catalyst, rather than as a regulator is being advocated by Alberta Municipal Affairs. According to a 1984 Alberta Municipal Affairs report, The Planner as a Catalyst, planners can encourage the improvement of communities through the development of public facilities and the encouragement of private-public partnerships and the involvement of other levels of government in the funding of local projects.

Land use planning and planners are unlikely to disappear during the 1980s, but the future is problematic.

The Role and Nature of Regional and General Municipal Plans

The postwar period has been marked by the widespread preparation of general municipal plans and regional plans to establish policies for the accommodation and control of growth. Planners during this period advocated their adoption because such plans and their policies, in planning theory, were viewed on the basis of land use planning. The regulatory powers of land use control and subdivision approvals were to be carried out under the guidance of regional and general municipal plans. However, the contents of the legislation are such that in some cases it has been possible to ignore the general municipal plan in such deliberations.

Until the 1980s no regional planning commissions had adopted regional plans, and only preliminary regional plans were in place. The most effective part of these plans was "their ability to control the spread of unplanned residential growth in agricultural areas and in the urban fringe". There have been problems

with the implementation of these plans because regional planning commissions administer the subdivision approval process, but do not issue development permits. The 1977 planning act, giving regional planning commissions a deadline for the preparation of regional plans, defined a regional plan in the following terms:

A regional plan

- (a) shall provide for the present and future land use and development of the planning region, and
- (b) may regulate and control the use and development of land in the planning region.

Such plans were adopted by regional planning commissions and took effect when ratified by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. These plans have been implemented through land use and subdivision controls and the policies of general municipal plans. However, neither of these controls or plans have been bound by the legislation to conform to the regional plan. Only municipal land use bylaws have been required by the act to conform to the regional policies. Several critical areas for the conformance of land use bylaws have been identified by the Alberta Planning Board. These areas are:

- areas for accommodating growth;
- the protection of regional significant land uses such as servicing and transportation facilities and corridors, environmentally sensitive areas, open space and recreation features ... and better agricultural land;
- the establishment of fringe areas around municipalities;
- the establishment of planning boundaries and appropriate size limits for hamlets;
- areas where multiple parcel residential development will not be permitted; and
- the establishment of separation distances between heavy industry and incompatible land uses.

It is difficult to gauge the impact which recently completed plans will have on development in each region for five reasons: only five plans have been ratified by the Minister, by 1984 (Edmonton, Southeast Alberta, Palliser, Calgary and Battle River); the period has been one of slow growth when land use regulation has little impact on development; municipal land use bylaws can

implement regional land use policies only when these policies have been made explicit and prescriptive (as in the case of the Alberta Planning Board's policy guidelines on the protection of agricultural land); the strongest implementation mechanism available to regional planning commissions is subdivision approval authority and it appears that the province is open to this power being given to municipalities; the impact of regional plans will depend on "the relative importance that elected officials attach to local and regional plans". Some local officials are not as attuned to regional policies because the majority of them do not sit on the regional planning commissions, and many are generally more concerned about local problems and concerns. The 1980s will be critical years in determining the role of regional plans because the plans are just now being ratified and their implementation has just begun.

The history of general municipal plans is relatively recent because only a few plans were adopted before 1970. However, with the passage of the 1977 planning act, general municipal plans became mandatory for most municipalities. The definition of general municipal plans changed very little with each change in the legislation. If anything, the most recent planning act gives councils more flexibility in the contents of their plans. It states:

A general municipal plan shall:

- (a) describe
 - (i) the land use proposed for the municipality, and
 - (ii) the manner of and proposals for future development in the municipality;
- (b) designate or describe areas of the municipality that would, in the opinion of the council, be suitable for an area structure plan or an area redevelopment plan or both;
- (c) contain any other matters that the council considers necessary.

Until the 1977 planning act, municipal bylaws and other activities had to conform to the general municipal plan due to the requirement that the council or other public authority should not commence any undertaking or public project that was inconsistent or at variance with the proposals contained in the general plan. Elliot, a former employee of the Department of the Attorney-General who was responsible for drawing up the 1977 planning act, has explained that conformance of the land use bylaw to the general plan was not mandatory under the new

legislation because it: "... could be very fruitful ground of attack on land use bylaws in the courts. If the land use bylaw had to comply with the general municipal plan, you can imagine the kinds of legal attacks that would be forthcoming on the basis that the land use bylaw does not conform or comply with one political statement or another in the plan" (Elliot 1978). General plans have therefore acted as policy documents on which land use regulations are based. The degree to which these policies have been followed has in many cases been left to the discretion of planning officials and elected representatives (Riddett 1984).

Recently the Inter-Agency Planning Branch sponsored a number of reviews of the land use planning system in Alberta with special concern for red tape in its administration. Sklofsky, a planning consultant in Edmonton and formerly with the City of Edmonton and the Alberta Department of Municipal Affairs, wrote that adopted general municipal plans were used very little by most municipalities:

"With respect to internal municipal management, [a general plan] seldom deals with the operational reality of improving service provision through 1) operational plans, 2) the financial constraints, i.e. the municipal budget, which forces a staged improvement programme or 3) through corporate priority setting where political tradeoffs are made" (Sklofsky 1984).

In many cases, general municipal plans have been put in place by municipalities because they are a statutory requirement; but, in practice, little use is made of them.

It is notable that such statutory instruments as regional and general municipal plans have less impact on property than regulations. The extent of this impact is determined by the use of these plans by regulatory authorities such as planning commissions, and whether the regulations are based on the policies contained in the statutory plans.

Regulations and plans have the most impact on urban development during periods of rapid growth due to the increase in development permit and subdivision applications. During periods of slow growth, the impact of such regulations is significantly reduced. Because regulations only influence new construction and current changes in the urban and rural environment, the total impact of regulations becomes visible only after long periods of time. As Hamilton notes,

"these cumulative decisions from the past make it more difficult to achieve the goals of today" (Hamilton 1981).

Despite the preparation of many general municipal plans, there is serious doubt whether they play a significant role in land use planning in Alberta. While the regional plans constrain the policies of land use regulations, no such requirement is made for general plans. Although recent surveys indicate that these plans are referred to by politicians, it is likely that general plans are sufficiently flexible to form no restrictions on the actions of councils in making decisions. On the other hand, regional plans do have some clout which will continue as they are implemented by land use bylaws and subdivision approvals. It appears that such provincial concerns as the preservation of agricultural land have been served well by the statutory provisions for regional plans.

The Technocratic Nature of Planning in Alberta

The 1977 planning act enables comprehensive planning and policy-making through general and regional plans and the implementation of these policies through such regulatory powers as land use control and subdivision approvals. The nature of land use planning in Alberta is determined by what types of planning instruments are applied. Due to the reliance of the system on regulatory instruments and their implementation by appointed officials, land use planning in the province is primarily a technocratic system.

In summary, this discussion has focused on the technocratic nature of land use planning in four ways. The number and complexity of land use regulations has increased; the approval process for various plans and bylaw changes has proven lengthy and cumbersome; although regional plans have become less regulatory, municipal plans and bylaws are now in place to regulate property; in some instances, the nature of regulations is changing from traditional zoning controls to public-private negotiations under development control.

Alberta, like other provinces, has increasingly relied on statutory instruments or regulations. Hamilton (1981) in a survey of statutory instruments regulating property found that, compared to Alberta, only Quebec and Newfoundland have more statutory instruments in effect. He concluded that "anyone attempting to subdivide, to develop or use real property would, by necessity, be forced to become familiar with the content of some or all of these statutory instruments". Municipal land use bylaws are just one part of a broader regulatory context which has grown increasingly complex.

The nature of the regulations in land use bylaws has also grown increasingly complex. Under the 1929 act land use bylaws were restricted to the control of uses, height, ground area, building bulk, building lines, the density of population and architectural design controls. Meanwhile, under the current legislation, this list has been expanded to include: lot size, fences, walls, parking, loading areas, landscaping, excavation, the location of access roads, lighting and billboards. Because land use control is a statutory requirement for municipalities with more than 1,000 residents, these prescriptive land use controls are in place throughout Alberta.

The development of suburban land, especially in the larger cities, has become a lengthy, cumbersome process. For example, the development of a suburban residential neighbourhood generally involves the following steps:

- i preliminary investigation and acquisition;
- ii annexation
- iii regional plan amendment;
- iv general plan amendment;
- v Area Structure Plan preparation and approval;
- vi Neighbourhood Structure Plan preparation and approval;
- vii subdivision;
- viii land use bylaw amendment; and finally
- ix development of housing.

With respect to subdivision and plan approval, Driver (1983) concluded that the process was considerably hindered by the lengthy circulation process required. In the City of Edmonton, some 94 copies of a proposed subdivision are circulated for comment to various agencies and government departments. Although fifteen weeks was identified as the ideal length of time for the approval of area structure plans, it generally takes much longer. In 1980, Pilot Sound required 61 weeks to complete the approval process and, in 1982, the Meadows area structure plan required 34 weeks to make its way to final approval. It must be remembered that the approval of an area structure plan represents only one stage in the development process.

This process is also slow due to the lack of any limited time frame for the approval of general municipal plans, land use bylaw amendments and annexation requests. The approval of subdivision is given a 60-day limit under the planning act, but extensions are possible. During the period of high economic growth, from 1978 to 1981, it was not uncommon for subdivisions to receive three or four 60-day extensions to allow for public agencies to comment on the proposal (Driver 1984).

Land use regulation is now entering a new period as the regulatory aspects of land use control are passed on to municipalities with the adoption of advisory, rather than prescriptive, regional plans.

The introduction of more general advisory regional plans is, however, one step towards not only increasing local autonomy, but also reducing the regulatory nature of land use planning as it removes one more level of regulation.

Many municipalities have taken advantage of the provisions for direct control districts under the act. The approval of development in these districts requires negotiations between the municipality and the applicant. This form of development control has not been without its problems.

"A well documented problem with the direct control districts under a land use bylaw is the opportunity for large areas of land to be designated for particular land uses by Council without public representation or scrutiny" (Sturtevant 1983).

These and other problems are currently under consideration by the Department of Municipal Affairs in a general study of "red tape" in the Alberta planning system.

Land use planning in Alberta continues to be a technocratic activity of "regulation in the public interest". Nevertheless, some have come to question the efficacy of this approach. Driver (1983,1984), Sturtevant (1983) and Sklofsky (1984) have offered similar conclusions on land use planning in Alberta . Sklofsky has emphasized the need to utilize policy-making and planning "to link planning, policy and management mechanisms to cope with conditions". Furthermore, he suggests that the regulation of land uses should be less regulatory and more negotiative. Sturtevant offers similar conclusions. "The use of control and restriction should be minimized and implemented only where cooperative means have been tried." On the other hand, Driver suggests that the existing framework be modified to include appeals in certain processes and a reduction in the latitude for a municipality to make requirements in the approval process not specifically outlined in the act.

Whatever changes the Alberta government does make in the next revision of the planning act, it will be faced with a fundamental choice. It can decide to continue the past history of simply leaving the basic nature of planning as a regulatory technocratic activity. Alternatively, it could completely revamp land use planning so that it encourages public-private collaboration.

Appendix

Outline History of Land Use Planning Activity in Alberta, 1945-1984

- 1945 Department of Economic Affairs established to promote the orderly economic development of the province.
- Edmonton city officials, concerned with uncontrolled fringe development, begin advocating establishment of a Regional Planning Board, composed of representatives from the city and adjoining municipalities.
- 1946 Alberta Industrial Corporation Act adopted, establishing an agency with wide powers to attract industry and provide incentives.
- The Red Deer Regional Commission is established and, with the assistance of the provincial Town Planning Branch, prepares a 30-year plan for the development of the city and the surrounding communities.
- Calgary appoints a town planner (Jack Lamb) to the City Engineering Department. A planning department is not established until 1951.
- 1947 Oil is discovered at Leduc, near Edmonton.
- Imperial Oil, CMHC and the Provincial Town Planning Office jointly plan and develop Devon for Leduc oil field workers.
- Edmonton's Town Planning Commission proposes a new plan for a civic centre.
- Initial steps taken by the City of Calgary and neighbouring municipalities to establish a Regional Planning Commission.
- Alberta appoints a Royal Commission to investigate provincial-municipal relations.
- 1948 Amendment to the Town Planning Act provides for interim development controls administered by the province for subdivisions located in areas not covered by municipal zoning bylaws.
- Calgary Town Planning Commission recommends to City Council that a master plan be prepared.
- Calgary Branch of the Community Planning Association of Canada (CPAC) is established.
- 1949 Edmonton establishes a Town Planning Department and hires its first planner (Noel Dant). Professors Harold Spence-Sales and John Bland are hired to advise the city "on the state of physical development and administration under the Town Planning Act of 1929". They report in September 1949.
- 1950 The Town Planning Act is amended and its name changed to the Town and Rural Planning Act. The Act is further amended in 1951 and 1952.

A Town and Rural Planning Branch is established within the Department of Municipal Affairs; the position of Director of Town Planning is transferred from Department of Public Works to Municipal Affairs; Harry Lash is appointed Director of Town and Rural Planning.

Edmonton District Planning Commission is established under authority of the 1950 amendments to the Planning Act.

Edmonton establishes a Technical Planning Board and enacts an interim development bylaw suspending and replacing the 1933 zoning bylaw while a master plan is prepared. An Interim Appeal Board replaces the Zoning Appeal Board.

Edmonton branch of the Community Planning Association of Canada established.

Calgary establishes a Town Planning Department. Calgary's Town Planning Commission publishes Background for Planning: City of Calgary.

- 1951 Alberta City Act adopted; includes a section on subdivisions, giving city council power to pass a bylaw requiring plans of subdivision to be submitted to the City Engineer and the Town Planning Commission before being submitted to the Provincial Planning Advisory Board.

Outline General Plan for the Edmonton Metropolitan Area is prepared by Edmonton District Planning Commission.

Calgary District Planning Commission is established.

City of Calgary establishes a Technical Planning Board and retains Eric Thrift, Director of the Metropolitan Planning Commission of Greater Winnipeg, to be its consultant to supervise the technical work in preparing a general plan.

- 1952 Alberta Housing Act adopted, allowing cities to build low cost housing under the National Housing Act.

Calgary suspends its zoning bylaw and adopts an interim development control bylaw.

Objectives and Survey Program for the General Plan prepared by the Calgary District Planning Commission.

Red Deer District Planning Commission established.

- 1953 The Town and Rural Planning Act is rewritten and renamed, "An act providing the means of obtaining orderly development of Municipalities in the Province by planning the development and use of land". The Act is further amended in 1954 and 1955.

Alberta Planning Conference is held in Red Deer, the first conference sponsored by the Alberta Division of the Community Planning Association of Canada.

Edmonton District Planning Commission's Outline General Plan is approved by all member municipalities.

An Outline Report on Land Requirements for Housing the Metropolitan Population, 1953-1981 prepared by the District Planning Commission.

- 1954 A General Plan for Fort Saskatchewan is prepared by the Edmonton District Planning Commission.
Medicine Hat Regional Planning Commission established.
Royal Commission on the Metropolitan Development of Calgary and Edmonton established (the McNally Commission).
- 1955 Town and Rural Planning Act revised and amended; further amendments in 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960 and 1961.
Lethbridge District Planning Commission established (name later changed to Oldman River District Planning Commission).
- 1956 Report of the Royal Commission on the Metropolitan Development of Calgary and Edmonton.
Alberta New Towns Act adopted, permitting the province to designate new towns.
- 1957 Amendment to the Town and Rural Planning Act designated the city council, not a provincial agency, as the body to give final approval for zoning bylaws; the act only requires municipalities to deposit a copy of the bylaw with the Provincial Director of Planning.
- 1958 Peace River District Planning Commission established.
Edmonton District Planning Commission adopts a Preliminary District Plan, Metropolitan Section.
Calgary adopts a comprehensive zoning bylaw.
- 1959 Amendment to Alberta Town and Rural Planning Act adopted, requiring the Provincial Planning Advisory Board to approve all zoning bylaws.
Provincial-Municipal Advisory Committee established.
A Study of Calgary's Past and Probable Future Population Growth is prepared by P. J. Smith for the Calgary City Planning Commission; projects a population of 645,000 for Calgary in 1981.
A Preliminary Report on Urban Renewal in the City of Calgary is prepared by the City Planning Department, outlining 16 potential renewal areas.
Calgary Area Transportation Study published.
- 1960 Battle River District Planning Commission established.
Amendment to Town and Rural Planning Act spells out for the first time the mandatory and optional content of general plans.
Report on the Need for a Master Plan, prepared by the Calgary Board of Commissioners.
- 1961 Preliminary District Plan, Metropolitan Part, a land use plan, is officially adopted by the Edmonton District Planning Commission and approved by the Provincial Advisory Board.
Preliminary Report on Urban Renewal, prepared by the Edmonton City Planning Department.

Edmonton adopts a new zoning bylaw.

Progress Report: General Plan prepared by the City of Calgary Planning Advisory Commission.

Calgary annexes surrounding suburban areas, making the city and the metropolitan area the same.

- 1962 "Planning for Edmonton - 1980", a conference on Edmonton's future growth and development.

Calgary completes two general plan studies: Industry in the General Plan and Residential Development in the General Plan, and a preliminary urban renewal study for a part of the downtown area is completed.

- 1963 A new Planning Act adopted, replacing the 1955 Town and Rural Planning Act; amended ten times before being replaced by the Planning Act (1977).

Calgary General Plan adopted by the City Council

The Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study (METS), a General Plan for the City of Edmonton and several urban renewal studies are completed.

Calgary Regional Planning Commission adopts Preliminary Regional Plan.

- 1965 Alberta Housing Act adopted, allowing municipalities to undertake public housing and urban renewal projects under the N.H.A.

Edmonton City Council adopts an urban renewal program and seeks federal and provincial funding.

Urban Renewal Plan for Action prepared by the Calgary Urban Renewal Department.

The Interim Report of the Downtown Master Plan and General Plan Revisions approved by Calgary City Council.

Edmonton City Council establishes an Advisory Committee on Urban Renewal.

The Future of Downtown Calgary, the first comprehensive plan for the downtown area, adopted by City Council.

Urban Renewal Scheme 1-A, a detailed study proposing a 31 block urban renewal scheme prepared by City of Calgary.

- 1967 Alberta Housing and Urban Renewal Corporation is established.

Preliminary Regional Plan, Metropolitan Section, prepared by the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission.

General Plan, City of Edmonton, "a comprehensive document outlining the future growth of the City as determined by sound planning principles".

Edmonton City Council adopts the recommendations of the Urban Renewal Concept report as revised and amended by the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee.

Edmonton initiates the "Outline Plan" method of planning new suburban residential areas, a change from the neighbourhood or block planning method. The Outline Plan establishes the general form, the amount and the location of major land uses and infrastructure. The West Jasper Place Outline Plan is the first.

Calgary Transportation Study published.

Calgary City Planning Department prepares applications for urban renewal projects for the Eau Claire and Victoria Park areas, as well as a city-wide urban renewal study.

- 1968 Major amendments to the Planning Act adopted, relating to subdivision appeals, preliminary regional plans, development control and powers of development officers. The new amendment requires the adoption of Preliminary Regional Plans and permits the use of development control as an alternative to zoning.

Edmonton City Council adopts a new policy regarding subdivisions, requiring developers to repay land servicing costs. Previously the city provided all subdivision services, amortizing them against property over 25 years.

- 1969 Calgary adopts a new zoning bylaw, replacing the 1958 zoning bylaw.
Downtown Redevelopment Guidelines, Calgary City Planning Department.

- 1970 Alberta adopts the City Transportation Act requiring cities to prepare a comprehensive transportation study.

Calgary General Plan approved by City Council, superseding the 1963 plan.

- 1971 The Role of Regional Planning, report published by the Task Force on Urbanization and the Future.

Edmonton City Council adopts a General Plan bylaw, formally approving the 1967 General Plan. The bylaw was introduced in 1969.

Preliminary Regional Plan prepared by the Calgary Regional Planning Commission.

Calgary adopts Development Control Bylaw and updates its 1967 Transportation Study.

- 1972 Alberta Planning Fund established, requiring all municipalities to contribute according to a percentage of one mill depending on the "class" of the municipality (rural municipalities 0.1%, town and villages 0.3%, and cities 0.5% of a mill).

Minister of Municipal Affairs announces work will begin on drafting a new Planning Act.

Calgary's Housing and Urban Renewal Department is consolidated within the Planning Department.

Calgary City Council adopts Rules Respecting the Use of Land as a supplement to the Development Control Bylaw.

- 1973 Alberta Land Use Forum established by the legislature to study all aspects of urban and rural land use; Report and Recommendations published in January, 1976, but no direct action was taken on the recommendations.

The Edmonton Municipal Planning Commission is created, a regulatory body composed of senior city officials who review subdivision, condominium conversions, zoning amendments and development permit applications.

Calgary updates its 1970 General Plan.

Calgary initiates a Neighbourhood Improvement Programme, eventually designating 9 neighbourhoods.

- 1974 Towards a New Planning Act for Alberta, published by the Department of Municipal Affairs.
- The City of Edmonton Transportation Plan is approved by the City Council.
- Edmonton designates its first district for federal funding under the Neighbourhood Improvement Programme (Canora).
- Towards a New Planning Act for Alberta: A Review, prepared by the Calgary City Planning Department and approved by City Council.
- Calgary appoints a Planning Advisory Committee "to review the progress and discuss the implications...of various phases of the Transportation Study and Downtown Master Plan".
- 1975 Calgary General Plan review is initiated.
- Calgary City Council appoints an Ad Hoc Heritage Committee "to inventory and investigate the possible protection of historical sites...under the Heritage Act of Alberta".
- 1976 Edmonton City Council authorizes a review of the General Plan and preparation of a downtown plan.
- Housing and Urban Growth, prepared by Edmonton Regional Planning Commission.
- Calgary's Planning Department prepares a series of eight background papers as part of its review of the General Plan, covering population, transportation, housing downtown, leisure time activities, growth, the economy and the role of the general plan.
- 1977 A new Planning Act is adopted by the legislature, replacing the 1973 act. It did not come into force until 1978.
- A Choice of Growth Management Strategies: Final Report by the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission.
- 1978 A study of Alberta's regional planning commissions authorized by the Alberta Planning Board and terms of reference are published.
- Low Income Housing in Alberta: A Review of the Community Housing Programme prepared for Alberta Housing and Public Works, CMHC and the cities of Edmonton and Calgary.
- Draft Edmonton Regional Plan prepared by the Edmonton Regional Planning Commission.
- Edmonton's City Planning Department establishes a special project team to conduct a comprehensive review of the existing land use control system and prepare a Land Use Bylaw conforming with the new Planning Act.
- Calgary's General Municipal Plan revised and updated, as required by the Planning Act.
- Calgary establishes a Housing Corporation, a non-profit organization to provide housing for people not eligible for rent geared to income housing but who require assistance.
- Downtown and Inner City Plan, Discussion Papers, a series of seven papers published in connection with the preparation of the Downtown and Inner City Plans.

- 1979 Alberta Planning Board, after consultation with all regional planning commissions, adopts a "regional review and approval mechanism" as the first step toward guidelines for the preparation, review and approval of regional plans.
- Planning Act amended to allow for Ministerial Regional Plans that will be applied to areas outside of existing regional planning areas.
- Toward a Framework for resolving Regional Planning Issues: A Progress Report and Discussion Paper, published as part of the review of regional planning.
- Towards a Downtown Plan, the Edmonton General Municipal Plan: Draft Bylaw and A New Land Use Bylaw for Edmonton are prepared by the Edmonton City Planning Department.
- Calgary City Council approves the new Calgary General Municipal Plan, the Inner City Plan and the Area Redevelopment Plan.
- Calgary annexes another 26 square miles, bringing the city's total land area to 188.9 square miles.
- 1980 A Guide for the Preparation, Review and Approval of Regional Plans is approved by the Alberta Planning Board.
- Provincial Housing Programmes in Alberta prepared by the Department of Housing and Public Works.
- The Local Authorities Board approves Edmonton's annexation application giving it jurisdiction over Saint Albert and Sherwood Park.
- 1981 The Calgary Regional Planning Commission completes a draft regional plan.
- The Alberta Planning Board publishes Rural Industrial Land Use - Some Policy Guidelines for the 1980's.
- The provincial cabinet overturns the Local Authorities Board's Edmonton annexation decision and leaves Saint Albert and Sherwood Park independent of the City of Edmonton.
- The Edmonton Regional Planning Commission completes another draft of their Regional Plan.
- 1982 The Alberta Planning Board publishes A Decision Report: Revised Guidelines for Regional Plan Preparation and Review, and A Decision Report: Framework for Application of Regional Plan Guidelines.
- 1983 The Alberta Planning Board publishes Agricultural Land: The Role of the Alberta Planning Board.
- The Yellowhead Regional Planning Commission and the South Peace Regional Planning Commission are established.
- The Minister of Municipal Affairs approves the South-east Alberta Regional Plan.
- The Environmental Council of Alberta begins hearings on expanding the agricultural land base in Alberta.

- 1984 The Minister of Municipal Affairs approves The Calgary Regional Plan, the Battle River Regional Plan and the Edmonton Regional Plan.
The Alberta Planning Board announces that some Regional Planning Commission budgets will undergo budget cuts of 30% to 40%.
The Department of Municipal Affairs publishes The Planner as Catalyst.

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